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AUTHOR Clarken, Rodney H.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines education in a way that offers guidance and solutions available in the Baha'i literature on vital worldwide programs which affect everyone. The paper identifies some principals and ideas the Baha'i literature contains concerning the role of education, educational administration, child development, pedagogy, and curriculum. The paper also addresses problems related to education in diverse settings and suggests areas of research that might be important for testing the value of these principals and ideals. These principals and ideals are an introduction to the guidance given in the Baha'i literature that discusses the role and importance of education, the importance of family and teachers, the nature of education and humans, the purpose of life and civilization, and the virtues and attributes befitting of humanity. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

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Education for a New World

Dr. Rodney H. Clarken

Director of Laboratory Field Experiences and Associate Professor
Department of Education
Northern Michigan University
1401 Presque Isle Avenue
Marquette, MI 49855-5348, USA
Tel: 906-227-1881 (office), 906-228-7668 (home)
Fax: 906-227-2764; E-Mail: rclarken@nmu.edu
Webpage: http://www.nmu.edu/staff/rclarken/

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Education for a New World

Rodney H. Clarken

The problems of education are increasingly becoming challenging issues throughout the world that can no longer be ignored without placing our futures in peril. Education is the most potent vehicle for bringing about peace, unity and progress needed if this civilization is to advance. But what knowledge is most worth knowing and how can it be best taught? These are questions that have confronted humankind down through the ages and that face the governments and peoples of the world today. This paper begins to formulate a statement on education that gives the guidance and solutions available in the Bahá'í literature on these vital worldwide problems that affect everyone. It is a refinement of the author's earlier work entitled "Implications for Education from the Bahá'í Writings" (1975). The Bahá'í literature, consisting primarily of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, is rich with guidance and solutions. This paper identifies some principles and ideals the Bahá'í literature contains concerning educational administration, child development, pedagogy, and curriculum. It addresses problems related to education in diverse settings and suggests areas of research that might be pursued to test the value of these principles and ideals.

This paper attempts to address the following concerns and guidance expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1875:

> The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.
>
> It is therefore urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are, and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society. These should be published and spread throughout the nation, so that at least the leaders among the people should become, to some degree, awakened, and arise to exert themselves along those lines which will lead to their abiding honour. The publication of high thoughts is the dynamic power in the arteries of life; it is the very soul of the world. Thoughts are boundless sea, and the effects and varying conditions of existence are as the separate forms and individual limits of the waves; not until the sea boils up will the waves rise and scatter their pearls of knowledge on the shore of life . . .
>
> Public opinion must be directed toward whatever is worthy of this day, and this is impossible except through the use of adequate arguments and the adducing of clear, comprehensive and conclusive proofs. For the helpless masses know nothing of the world, and while there is no doubt that they seek and long for their own happiness, yet ignorance like a heavy veil shuts them away from it. (1975, pp. 109-110)

An categorization of extracts from *Bahá'í Education* (Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, 1977), along with brief introductory commentaries, has been prepared as an extension and complement of this paper. That work, entitled *Bahá'í Principles of Education* (Clarken, 1998), can be referred to for additional supporting quotations from the Bahá'í writings, and for a more comprehensive treatment of some of the topics discussed in this paper.

Review of Literature

Besides the many volumes of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921), Shoghi Effendi (1896-1957), and the Universal House of Justice (1963-), several other publications by Bahá'ís and Bahá'í institutions have been used as source material. Several documents are presently available presenting Bahá'í ideas on education to various agencies and audiences, i.e., "Bahá'í Education" (Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, August 1976), "Position Statement on Education" (Bahá'í International Community Task Force on Education, January 1989), "Education for a New Namibia" (NSA of Namibia, August 1990), "Educational Policy: A Bahá'í Perspective" (NSA of India, November 1985), "Charter for Bahá'í Schools" (*American Bahá'í*, April 1990) and the Anisa Model literature (Jordon and Streets, 1972; Streets and Jordan, 1973; Kalinowski and Jordan, 1973).

Many other scholars and educators have written on Bahá'í education and their work has also been consulted in developing this paper, i.e., G. Marks (South Africa), A. Jones (Australia), H. Danesh (Switzerland), I. Ayman, D. Troxel, D. Allen, M. Smith, H. Hanson, J. Hatcher, I. Taafaki, R. Johnson, W. Diehl, N. Rutstein, C. Miller (U.S.A.), G. Eyford, W. Hatcher, E. Muttart (Canada), S. Waite, H. Rost (India), P. Lample, F. Arbab (Israel), H. Nikjoo, S. Vickers (England), P. Christensen, (Kenya), E. Anello (Bolivia), J. Savi, E. Tinto (Italy), M. Higgins (Japan) and L. Nuguchi (Hong Kong/China).

Role of Education

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the first authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's work after his passing, wrote about the primacy of education to the Persian leaders and people in 1875.

> Observe to what a degree the lack of education will weaken and degrade a people. Today [1875] from the standpoint of population the greatest nation in the world is China, which has something over four hundred million inhabitants. On this account, its government should be the most distinguished on earth, its people the most acclaimed. And yet on the contrary, because of its lack of education in cultural and material civilization, it is the feeblest and the most helpless of all weak nations. Not long ago, a small contingent of English and French troops went to war with China and defeated that country so decisively that they took over its capital Peking. Had the Chinese government and people been abreast of the advanced sciences of the day, had they been skilled in the arts of civilization, then if all the nations on earth had marched against them the attack would still have failed, and the attackers would have returned defeated whence they had come.
>
> Stranger even than this episode is the fact that the government of Japan was in the beginning subject to and under the protection of China, and that now for some years, Japan has opened its eyes and adopted the techniques of contemporary progress and civilization, promoting sciences and industries of use to the public, and striving to the utmost of their power and competence until public opinion was focused on reform. This government has currently advanced to such a point that, although its population is only one-sixth, or even one-tenth, that of China, it has recently challenged the latter government, and China has finally been forced to come to terms. Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honor, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people. It is, furthermore, a vital necessity to establish schools throughout Persia, even in the smallest country towns and villages, and to encourage the people in every possible way to have their children learn to read and write. If necessary, education should even be made compulsory. Until the nerves and arteries of the nation stir into life, every measure that is attempted will prove vain; for the people are as the human body, and determination and the will to struggle are as the soul, and a soulless body does not move. This dynamic power is present to a superlative degree in the very nature of the Persian people, and the spread of education will release it. (1975, pp. 110-112)

Educational Administration

The role of the administration is to translate purpose into collective action. The Bahá'í writings contain principles relevant to educational administration that can be used to improve the management of education and identify the variables necessary for successful collective life. Much of the current literature on effective administration and organizations supports the principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh in the nineteenth century. When groups understand these principles, value these qualities and strive to practice them in their various communities, they can cause meaningful improvements. Bahá'í communities serve as models of the effectiveness and practical application of these principles. The Bahá'í Local Spiritual Assembly, the primary administrative institution in Bahá'í communities, can serve as a model for the administration of a school community. The principles and guidelines for the Local Spiritual Assembly and the individuals in the community being administered are applicable.

Shoghi Effendi, the authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's work after 'Abdu'l-Bahá, describes the role of the Local Spiritual Assembly and its relationship to the individual.

> You should turn to your local Assembly in the strictest confidence, and seek their aid and advice. These bodies have the sacred obligation to help, advise, protect, and guide the believers in every way within their power when appealed to - indeed they were established just for the purpose of keeping order and unity and obedience to the law of God amongst the believers. You should go to them as a child would to its parents. (1941, p. 16)

This structure requires certain responsibilities from both the administration and those being administered and is contrary to the spirit existing in many systems. Today there is a general disrespect for those in authority. This results partly because those in authority do not deserve the respect, partly because of tradition and culture, and partly because leaders are acceptable scapegoats. Bahá'u'lláh (1971) and 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1969) state that those in authority must earn this respect by administering with justice. Without some consultation, justice and unity, little constructive change can occur.

The administration of a school creates the structure and governance for the school community. It is important for it to have a sound and effective philosophy of operation. The Bahá'í administration contains certain elements found in the three existing forms of government without "any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess" (Effendi, 1955, p. 152-3).

A purely democratic system depends on getting its mandate from the people and the participation of the governed. This approach is not efficient or practical as it requires lengthy discussions, decision-making, and knowledge that is not readily available to all involved. Bahá'í administration requires that those in authority must "acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision" (1955, p. 153).

An autocratic or aristocratic system is efficient, but conditions now require that the rights and responsibilities of all be safeguarded. There must be basic decisions agreed upon by all involved. The rights of all must be upheld. Corruption, bureaucratic tendencies and dictatorial authority generally found in these systems hamper proper functioning.

Bahá'í administration is based on a decision-making process called consultation. It is a powerful tool that can be used to make sound, agreeable decisions and to improve the schools. The purpose of consultation is to find the truth of a matter, not to vaunt one person's opinions over another's. The Bahá'í writings contain extensive guidance on consultation.

> Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should anyone among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments. (Bahá'u'lláh 1971, p. 8)

> The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Effendi, 1968, p. 21-2)

The clash of differing opinions is necessary, not the clash of personalities which causes ill-feeling and discord. Problems should be dealt with by looking at our own faults and not others, not in confrontation. Consultation also involves the sacrifice of opinions as Shoghi Effendi clearly states in a letter about spiritual assemblies.

> We all have a right to our opinions, we are bound to think differently - but a Bahá'í must accept the majority decisions of his assembly realizing that acceptance and harmony - even if a mistake has been made - are the really important things . . . It is better if they submit to the majority view and make it unanimous. But they are not forced to. What they must do, however, is to abide by the majority decision, as this is what becomes effective. They must not go around undermining the assembly by saying they disagreed with the majority. In other words, they must put the cause first and not their own opinions. He can ask the assembly to reconsider a matter, but he has no right to force them or create in harmony because they won't change. Unanimous votes are preferable, but certainly cannot be forced upon assembly members by artificial methods such as are used by other societies. (1947, p. 3)

Books have been written on the principles and methods of consultation found in the Bahá'í writings (Kolstoe, 1985; Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, 1980). The principle that a group of people working together is more effective than a group of individuals working alone is not a new one. The research relating to group theory verifies the value of consultation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá likens the family to a nation and explains the conditions necessary for proper functioning (1971, p. 100). This analogy can be applied to our schools. When any member of the school family recognizes some disunity or negative factors within the setting, a concerted effort must be put forth to remedy the situation. The strife and dissension existing in many schools today are harmful to the well-being of students and faculty.

Child Development

'Abdu'l-Bahá likens the growth of a child to that of a sapling. If it becomes crooked, it will be affected the rest of its life. The training received in the early years greatly influences development; therefore, the education of mothers and their first teachers is of utmost importance.

> The education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself the child

> will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind, for it is the mother who rears, matures, and guides the growth of the child. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1972, p. 29)
>
> The first trainer of the child is the mother. The babe, like unto a green and tender branch, will grow according to the way it is trained. If the training be right, it will grow right, and if crooked, the growth likewise, and unto the end of life it will conduct itself accordingly. Hence, it is firmly established that an untrained and uneducated daughter, on becoming a mother, will be the prime factor in the deprivation, ignorance, negligence, and the lack of training of many children . . . endeavor with heart, with life, to train your children, especially the daughters. No excuse is acceptable in this matter. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1930, p. 580)

An emphasis on early education is supported by these statements. The importance of equipping parents with the proper knowledge and skills for such a long lasting and vital responsibility is clear.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that individual differences are the result of inherited, acquired and innate character. Inherited qualities are those physical and mental characteristics that one acquires genetically from his parents. The greatest influence and the one teachers can most affect is acquired character, which formal and informal education is the primary force. Innate differences are inborn characteristics unique to that person that accounts for why children from the same family with similar genetic and environmental influences have different capacities (Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 318-20).

The varieties of human qualities result from differences of degrees in these areas of character. "Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental . . . Bahá'u'lláh has revealed principles and laws which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 37).

Bahá'u'lláh identifies knowing and loving as our two most important potentialities and the foundation for realizing all others. All must independently apply reason to what they see and hear; not blindly accept what is presented to them. Each person's capacities and responsibilities to the creative whole are different and important. People consist of body, mind and spirit. These three areas determine individual needs and development. The three elements necessary for development and change are corollaries of these three areas. "The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition, and action, unless these three conditions be forthcoming there is no execution or accomplishment" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 10).

Educators are concerned with all three areas, generally called the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The Bahá'í teachings contain ideas that are helpful to developing all three areas, relating to such things as using of reward and punishment, concentrating on the positive, encouraging high expectations and strengthening volition. "Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress" (Bahá'u'lláh, 1971, p. 81-2).

Teachers can encourage their students to develop their own volition. The importance given to acquiring an education is an important factor in motivating students. Such things as setting goals and developing perseverance and self discipline will improve progress. When values are in tune with reality, knowledge becomes the means to honor, prosperity, joy, gladness, happiness and exultation, and its acquisition more desirable and easily obtained (Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971). Lofty ideals and service improve volition. Schools must be actively involved with translating what is learned into reality and action. In this way, the true value of a learning will be realized and service will be the goal and result of action. "Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye

potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition" (Bahá'u'lláh, 1971, p. 149).

Tests are often viewed negatively, but they are important for growth physically, mentally and spiritually. Tests make us aware of our present condition and offer opportunities to develop new strengths. Traditionally examinations in schools have been used to compare students to others. The Bahá'í writings recognize the value of competition, but maintain that each person has individual differences that should be the cause of beauty and development, not standards of good and bad. Therefore, exams are not important for comparing students with one another, but for helping students become aware of their present abilities so they can further develop their potential.

Physical, mental and spiritual education should help us to go beyond our present state and develop new physical, mental and spiritual awareness and strength. Life creates such situations daily, but many people do not take advantage of them. Students need more successes than failures. When educators give exams with the idea of developing awareness, and releasing potential according to each individual's capabilities, then much growth can result.

Teaching

The Bahá'í writings praise education and its influence. They also praise and offer guidance for the art of teaching. "How wonderful will it be if the teachers are faithful, attracted, and assured, educated, and refined Bahá'ís, well grounded in the science of pedagogy, and familiar with child psychology" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1918).

> Your niece's profession in training and educating children is one that will give her rich reward, because she is aiding in the development of the characters of the youth of today, who will become the ones who will guide humanity tomorrow. If they could be guided both materially and spiritually, then it would be a great victory, because after the world goes through its present travail, spiritual values will predominate; and those youth who have the benefit of both material and spiritual education will be the true leaders of society. (Effendi, cited in Rost, 1969, p. 167)

Teachers can help develop student's higher levels of understanding rather than concentrate on dispensing and retrieving facts. They can arrange the student's environment so that learning and development occur and their potential is realized.

> People today seem to be very superficial in their thinking, and it would seem as if the educational systems in use are sorely lacking in ability to produce a mature mind in a person who has reached supposedly adult life! All the outside influences that surround the individual seem to have an intensely distracting effect, and it is a hard job to get the average person to do any deep thinking or even a little meditation on the problems facing him and the world at large. (Effendi, 1948, p. 2)

The Bahá'í writings use many analogies to help understand complex situations, such as the child like a plant and the educator like the gardener. As the conditions for each plant to thrive differ, so do the conditions of each person. A good gardener is aware of the needs of the plants and acts accordingly.

> These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let Thy Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop and appear in the utmost beauty. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 1970, p. 16-17)

If every plant were subjected to the same conditions, some plants might grow well, some fair and some poorly. This condition exists in most classrooms today. Just as there are no two kinds of flowers exactly alike, there are no two children exactly alike. All flowers require certain basics for life and growth and some desire similar growing conditions, but if you subject an African violet to the same conditions that you would a rose, hoping it will become like a rose, you will not only not get a rose, but you will not even get a very healthy African violet. Each flower has a potential that is not necessarily better or worse, but different from the others. Each has value and plays a part in the creative plan of the garden. The soil is tilled by tests and perseverance, and the "weeds of ignorance, thorns of superstitions and thistles of imitations," ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 76) cast aside so the fruit of knowledge and wisdom may appear.

The Bahá'í literature gives guidance on meeting the needs of all children, identifies the problems that must be dealt with, abolishes the idea that one child is intrinsically better than another and establishes the framework for the education of children. The teacher should identify the particular learning needs of each child and the conditions and methods to help each achieve his or her full potential. Those needs change as the children become more refined and their environments are altered.

Teachers must diagnose and prescribe the proper course of action for their students. There are certain basics that all people require, but each has individual needs that also must be met. The teacher must set and enforce healthy standards for development.

There is much controversy today about the way children should be grouped for learning. Some maintain that learning is best when those of similar abilities and interests are grouped together, while others claim that learning is improved through heterogeneous grouping. The Bahá'í teachings stress the value of unity in diversity. "The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Effendi, 1969).

Much prejudice and harm are propagated by keeping different peoples separated from one another. People labeled slow or somehow inferior to others suffer in opportunity and self-concept. If schools do not take an active role in breaking down these destructive patterns, then change will be more painful and improvement slowed. Research has shown that ability grouping is often detrimental to development. It not only hampers effective growth, but also discriminates against children from low socioeconomic and minority groups. There is a place in schools and society for the concept of ability grouping, but if this practice leads to unfair discrimination or furthers prejudice of any kind, it should not be continued.

Bahá'u'lláh identifies reward and punishment as the twin pillars on which the structure of world stability and order is sustained (1971, p. 219). It is also the process where the child develops positive and negative feelings about attitudes and behaviors. Over time, value systems develop which can guide the child to a happy and productive life. Without the proper rewards and punishments, many children will grow into adults with confused lives, no goals and little meaning. The responsibility for training children to develop healthy values is very important, and its neglect is a cause of the breakdown of our social order in this day.

Both reward and punishment are needed to uphold the structure; one without the other will not support it. We are coming from a tradition of using punitive measures to keep and develop order. Punishment without encouragement and an indication of what ought to be done, or reward and praise given indiscriminately without a standard, are not effective. Praise and rewards judiciously given are more effective than punishment. "The children who are at the head of their class must receive premiums. They must be encouraged and when one of them shows good advancement, for their further developments they must be praised and encouraged therein" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1916, p. 142).

Punishment is more effective when it is just and discharged in the spirit of love. Therefore, it is important to administer a punishment before becoming vengeful. Shoghi Effendi writes about the need for discipline, the nature of children, and the goal of every education.

> With regard to the statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and which you have quoted in your letter regarding a "problem child"; these statements of the Master, however, true in their substance, should never be given a literal interpretation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá could have never meant that a child should be left to himself entirely free. In fact Bahá'í education, just like any other system of education is based on the assumption that there are certain natural deficiencies in every child, no matter how gifted, which his educators, whether his parents, school masters, or his spiritual guides and receptors should endeavor to remedy. Discipline of some sort, whether physical or moral, or intellectual, is indeed indispensable, and no training can be said to be complete and fruitful if it disregards this element. The child when born is far from being perfect. It is not only helpless but actually imperfect, and even is naturally inclined towards evil. He should be trained so his natural inclinations harmonized, adjusted and controlled, and if necessary suppressed or regulated, so as to insure his healthy physical and moral development. Bahá'í's parents cannot simply adopt an attitude of non-resistance towards their children, particularly those who are unruly and violent by nature. It is not even sufficient that they should pray on their behalf. Rather they should endeavor to inculcate, gently and patiently, in their youthful minds such principles and teachings of the Cause with such tactful and loving care as would enable them to become "true sons of God" and develop into loyal and intelligent citizens of His Kingdom. This is the high purpose which Bahá'u'lláh himself has clearly defined as the chief goal of every education. (Cited in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, 1977, p. 65-66)

Both good and bad exist in people, but if left on their own, the lower nature will triumph. Only through training and effort can the higher nature become dominant. Teachers can assist the higher nature in its development by enabling success in this area, raising levels of aspiration and encouraging healthier self-concepts to children. "If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance, by the statement, 'you are most capable and if you endeavor you will attain the highest degree'" ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1930, p. 533-5).

Methods of Instruction

What method of instructing students is most effective for learning? The Bahá'í writings mention several forms of instruction directly and others indirectly.

> Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture of the subject matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if, together with the lectures, there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer. (Shoghi Effendi, 1932, p. 3-4)

> God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God. Therefore, depend on your own reason and judgement and adhere to the outcome of your

> own investigation; otherwise, you will be bitterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 75-76)

Shoghi Effendi also supports the use of workshops (1949, p. 2) and encourages the use of meditation. "Through meditation doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened" (1948a, p. 3). 'Abdu'l-Bahá talks about the value of speech and questioning.

> Most ideas must be taught through speech, not by book-learning. One child must question the other concerning those things and the other child must give the answer. In this way - they will make great progress. For example, mathematics must also be taught in the form of questions and answers. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1918)

Many teachers use this approach with great success. Both the questioner and the one questioned learn quickly from this method and each student is given the needed individual attention and helped to develop responsibility and knowledge.

Example is a potent factor in teaching. Children learn what they live, especially in the development of values and attitudes. The character and behavior of the teacher influences the children ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, 1977, p. 47).

'Abdu'l-Bahá identifies four criteria for the acquisition of knowledge: 1) senses, 2) intellect or reason, 3) traditional or scriptural, and 4) inspiration. He states that all available human criteria are erroneous and defective, but that by using all four together improves the likelihood that the knowledge is correct (1922, p. 48-9).

Fear has been abused in our society and classrooms, but it does not mean that it cannot be a valuable element in education. Fear is a negative word in our society, but it has a positive value. We all operate on fear and should recognize and use this knowledge for our betterment, not our destruction. "The fear of God hath ever been the prime factor in the education of His creatures" (1969, p. 27).

Curriculum

Every age has its particular needs and every person has unique endowments and aspirations, which are conditioned by the time and environment. The question of what to teach should never be static, but rather organic, adjusting to changing exigencies and requirements. Nevertheless, there are basic skills that must be acquired before an individual can independently investigate truth and live a fulfilled, happy and fruitful life.

> The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth. (Bahá'u'lláh, 1988, p. 169)

> The purpose of learning should be the promotion of the welfare of the people, and this can be achieved through crafts. It hath been revealed and is now repeated that the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind. . . True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world, not to pride and self-conceit, or to tyranny, violence and pillage. (Universal House of Justice, 1991, p. 3)

Bahá'u'lláh specifies that to know and to love are unique human distinctions and capacities, and regards knowledge and love as the primary purpose of creation. Bahá'u'lláh identifies those principles, virtues and attributes necessary for the healthy development of both the individual and

society and establishes the means for their development. It is everyones' duty and purpose to acquire virtues, and the educators' task to help develop them through the knowing and loving faculties (Bahá'u'lláh, 1971, p. 65). Education is to activate potential, rather than just dispense and retrieve facts.

We are physical, intellectual and spiritual beings. Each aspect needs development, ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 5) is linked to and influences the others. Mental afflictions can result in physical ailments and physical conditions can affect mental dispositions. Less understood is the interplay between these two domains and the spiritual realm.

Shoghi Effendi affirms the necessity for all three aspects to be treated within education (cited in National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'í of the United States, 1973, p. 10-11). The connections between the mind, body and soul are discussed in the Bahá'í writings and guidelines for their proper development and relationship set down. These guidelines, such as abstinence from narcotics and intoxicants except for treatment of illnesses, moderation in all things and cleanliness, protect the individual from practices which are harmful to physical, psychological and spiritual well-being (Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 37). The value of including these principles regarding health and healing in the curriculum is clear.

The physical reality allows the mind and spirit to give expression to their potentialities in this world. Science has been active in trying to meet the physical needs by providing both the knowledge and technology to understand and control the various aspects relating to the human body. More understanding of how to best facilitate human development on the physical level is being aggressively pursued.'Abdu'l-Bahá was reported to have said that children should have an hour of exercise so that their minds and bodies could be refreshed (1922, p. 144). Much more needs to be learned about the connection between our bodies, minds and spirits, and the things necessary for proper development, including the training of the senses to be effective tools for acquiring knowledge. We learn to walk, speak, listen, feel, smell, value and many other things with very little conscious guidance.

Our intellectual abilities enable us to discover the secrets of nature and bring to reality all scientific benefits. Formal education concentrates on the development of the mind and much effort has been exerted to properly develop it.

> Human education signifies civilization and progress, that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts, and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions, and discoveries of physical laws, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal. ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1954, p. 10)

Spiritual reality manifests itself in all aspects of life. If the spirit is not healthy and properly developed, both the body and mind are affected. Many parents and educators pay little attention to moral education and character training. The fruit of such neglect is apparent in our world today. The development of spiritual qualities is the most important element in producing a healthy individual and progressive society. How often have people with well-developed mental and physical powers been the cause of evil and harm. Spiritual training alone can correct these imperfections. The institutions that once met this need no longer do.

Teachers and parents are responsible for imparting the values that are important for happy productive living. This responsibility is often abused or neglected. Many people are confused about healthy values, and therefore, are not equipped to address the problem. Which values of the past are harmful? Which were good and should be kept? Many believe that children should be free to experiment and investigate completely on their own, and to develop their own values unhampered by the confused world around them. The teaching of values in school is controversial as no one can agree on which values should be taught or how to teach them, though it is acknowledged that whether we like it or not we do teach values by our actions and examples.

The Bahá'í writings address these concerns and answer these questions by explaining

which qualities are helpful to our lives, by engendering the will to cultivate them and by establishing how to develop them. This knowledge and desire can come from the Bahá'í writings in concert with experience. The acquiring of praiseworthy qualities in our individual and collective lives requires daily effort in schools and society and can be greatly aided by outside encouragement. This aspect of the curriculum then will identify the attributes necessary for a happy, productive life, encourage a desire to develop it, and create situations in which it may be developed. "But the indispensable basis of all is that he should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration" (Universal House of Justice, 1991, p. 282). As these qualities and attributes number in the thousands, it is not practical to consider them here.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the spiritual powers and that the mind is limited to input from the senses, whereas the spirit is not. Dreams are also manifestations of the spirit as people can travel about, solve intricate problems and have experiences that happen later in this world while they are dreaming.

> Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things; thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities; memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks, and comprehends. The intermediary between the five outward powers and the inward powers, is the sense which they possess in common, that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1954, p. 210)

> Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged, consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not. For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body. It is through the power of the soul that mind comprehendeth, imagineth, and exerteth its influence whilst the soul is a power that is free. (Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 1971, p. 337)

There are many more such teachings within the Bahá'í writings and their implications for future curricula varied and far reaching. A cursory glance at these writings will reveal many possibilities for reconstructing future curricula and approaches to acquiring the knowledge necessary for prosperity.

> Among those matters which require thorough revision and reform is the method of studying the various branches of knowledge and the organization of the academic curriculum. From lack of organization, education has become haphazard and confused. Trifling subjects which should not call for elaboration receive undue attention, to such an extent that students, over long periods of time, waste their minds and their energies on material that is pure supposition, in no way susceptible of proof, such study consisting in going deep into statements and concepts which careful examination would establish as not even unlikely, but rather as unalloyed superstition, and representing the investigation of useless conceits and the chasing of absurdities. There can be no doubt that to concern oneself with such illusions, to examine into and lengthy debate such idle propositions, is nothing but a waste of time and a marring of the days of one's life. Not only this, but it also prevents the individual from undertaking the study of those arts and sciences of which society stands in dire need. If it is a useful branch of knowledge, that is, if society will gain important benefits from it, then he should certainly pursue it with all his heart. If

> not, if it consists in empty, profitless debates and in a vain concatenation of imaginings that lead to no result except acrimony, why devote one's life to such useless hairsplittings and disputes ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1975, p. 105-106)

Beyond this, any subject pursued by an individual is conditioned by how he uses this knowledge. If it is for good, then the result will be beneficial, but, if it is for evil or selfish motives, then the result will be harmful. There are many subjects or curriculum possibilities mentioned in the Bahá'í writings.

> Every child without exception must from his earliest years make a thorough study of the art of reading and writing, and according to his own tastes and inclinations and the degree of his capacity and powers, devote extreme diligence to the acquisition of learning, beneficial arts and skills, various languages, speech, and contemporary technology. (Effendi, cited in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, 1977, p. 58)

Science is praised frequently and highly in the Bahá'í writings. To acquire scientific knowledge is considered worship by Bahá'u'lláh. By the term science is meant all knowledge acquired through a systematic process that produces some conclusions. This not only includes the kind of knowledge derived from the scientific method, but also other provable knowledge. In describing a scientific man, 'Abdu'l-Bahá further explains the nature of science.

> A scientific man is a true index and representative of humanity, for through the processes of inductive reasoning and research he is informed of all that pertains to humanity, its status, conditions, and happenings. He studies the human body politics, understands social problems, and weaves the web and texture of civilization. In fact, science may be likened to a mirror wherein the infinite forms and images of existing things are revealed and reflected. It is the very foundation of all individual and national development. Without this basis of investigation, development is impossible. (1971, p. 61)

Some general principles Bahá'u'lláh has established related to education are the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, the oneness of humankind, independent investigation of truth, universal compulsory education, harmony of science and religion spiritual solution to the economic problems, equality of men and women and elimination of prejudice of all kinds.

Many subjects mentioned throughout the Bahá'í writings will be a part of school curricula and will be influenced by Bahá'í principles. The sciences, including investigative and computative skills, will be taught for the betterment of all. History will consider the contribution of religion and its influence on history. Geography, psychology, anthropology and sociology will increase understanding of ourselves, the world and each other. The spiritual principles of economics will be taught. All communication skills will be refined so that all people may communicate and receive communications effectively. The arts will be promoted for the exaltation of all.

> One must be moderate in choosing the number of subjects. When there are too many the result is confusion. Moderation is necessary . . . One's brain must not be overburdened. For instance, students should not have more than six hours a day, lessons and preparations included. Otherwise they will not succeed. The brain becomes tired. (1922, p. 144)

CONCLUSION

These principles and ideals will not be realized until some effort is directed toward their fulfillment. We cannot expect these changes to come about quickly. Rather, it will be a slow, painful process in which the hopelessness of the existing situation becomes increasingly evident, and people begin to look for new and better ways of doing things. Then gradually, these principles will be adopted, until finally a new system has entirely replaced the old. Many have been adopted or adapted since they were proposed over one hundred years ago. The transformation of education for a new world involves the interplay of the part (individual) and the whole (society). If the part is better, the whole improves, and if the whole is in good health, it will contribute to the well-being of the part.

The world of humanity is experiencing the death pangs of an old era and the birth pangs of a new. Humankind is leaving the stage of adolescence and entering the state of maturity. Education is not meeting the needs of either individuals or society. Failure to remedy this problem threatens the well-being of both. Our future depends upon our effectively addressing the deficiencies resulting from a dysfunctional educational system.

Education, both formal and informal, is not equipping and enabling us to effectively address the problems that confront us. We see everywhere an increase of social problems and an inability of established systems to cope with them. Lack of a proper education has deprived humankind of both the knowledge and the volition to arise to their destiny.

These principles and ideals are an introduction to the guidance given in the Bahá'í literature that discusses the role and importance of education, the importance of the family and teachers, the nature of education and humans, the purpose of life and civilization and the virtues and attributes befitting of humanity. This work builds on other works on this topic and is supplemented by *Bahá'í Principles of Education* (Clarken, 1998). Future works can further explain the role of knowledge, volition and action in transforming education, offer Bahá'í experience and practical examples as a model, describe the type of individual and world that will result from these new approaches to education and further describe the features of this new conception of education.

Future research and efforts could lead to a statement which would be widely distributed. At the university and school levels it can be formally given to leaders and teachers, and in the general community, to the leaders of policy and thought. This information should be of interest to the general population, especially those interested in the education of young people. This work has attempted to provide a clearer vision of what education should be so that the leaders in the educational change process, both in Bahá'í and the greater communities, can begin to work toward that vision.

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